

Gerrit Smith Against Confiscation and White Disfranchisement

In a letter to Mr. Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith writes that he is satisfied with negro suffrage, without further punishing the white men of the South with disfranchisement. We commend most heartily the humane spirit embodied in the following extract from his letter, written as late as March 20:

GERRIT SMITH TO MR. GARRISON.
Petersboro, March 20.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison:

My Dear Sir—* I long for a heart-union between the North and the South. I fully believe it to be practicable. But the corner-stone of this heart-union is not (as the Republican party is too much inclined to believe) power to enforce it. It cannot be enforced. A common repentance for a common sin—that, and that alone, can be the corner-stone. But you will say that the heart of the South is too wicked to come into this common repentance. I admit it. *

Would I have the Southern leaders, whom Congress has just now disfranchised, relieved of this disfranchisement, and allowed to vote and take part in the government of their respective States and of the nation? I would. Now that suffrage is accorded to the Southern negro, I would. Now, that all the negroes can vote it is safe to let all the whites vote. I refer not here to the great numbers there will be at the polls to hold in check such whites as might be disposed to be oppressive. I mean also, that between negro voting on the one hand and our to be fraternal and generous spirit on the other such whites would be between influences that would fast take from them all remaining disposition to wrong either their black or white brethren. At the time the South laid down her arms, I felt that the safety of the nation required at least a temporary disfranchisement of all who had made war upon her. But I soon changed my mind at this point, and believed that only a few of them should be disfranchised. Not long after, I believed that none should be—that is, if this political equality of the negro were acknowledged—an acknowledgment which I always held should be a *sine qua non* in the settlement between the North and South. Just here let me say that I go, as I see you do, for the spirit and substance of Horace Greeley's unpopular motto, "Universal suffrage and universal amnesty." I say for the spirit and substance, since I would substitute "no punishment" for his "universal amnesty," believing as I do with the pre-eminence of *Christianity* that treason is not to be charged in such a war as this, and therefore that the conquered stand in no need of amnesty.

One reason why I would not have the Southern leaders disfranchised is, that the Southern people, including quite likely, no very small share of the blacks will be thereby dissatisfied—ay, and so deeply dissatisfied and so full both of indignation and pity, as to let the disfranchisement exert indirectly an amount of influence far greater than that they could have exerted directly. The relations between leader and follower at the South differs widely from that relation at the North. The Northern masses, having more intelligence and individuality than the Southern, are not so closely bound to their leaders. But the Southern masses, not easily reconciled to the dishonoring of their leaders, would never be at peace with the policy which disfranchises their leaders.

Would I have confiscation? At first, I thought that the confiscation of the large landed estates of the South for distribution amongst her white and black poor, would be a wise as well as benevolent measure. But very soon I ceased to think so. Her white poor do not call for this confiscation and distribution; and her blacks, with their habit of labor and great power for labor, and with their rapidly advancing education to direct their labor, and above all, with the ballot to protect its fruits, will soon have acquired no inconsiderable share of the whole wealth of the South. Again, as this is a war in which both parties were guilty, and therefore, neither entitled to indemnity for the past, there remains no justifiable call for confiscation. *

Peace without confiscation is worth more to the whole nation, and particularly to the black man than confiscation without peace. Poor as he is, the black man needs peace more than property; and having peace he will not long lack property.

By the way, at what point, in its invasion of the rights of a State, would our general government stop? It is urged to distribute the soil. If it is urged to require her to establish a school-system. Other demands will follow; and if it shall continue to yield the distinction between the office of the general government and that of the State governments will soon be obliterated, and the State governments will soon have disappeared.

Would I have Jefferson Davis set at liberty? Certainly—unless he is detained for offences—unauthorized by the laws of war. As the war arose from a mere rebellion into the dimensions and dignity of a civil war—or rather national war—so, according to the highest authorities, we have no right to punish any merely for being engaged in it. If, from the millions of the South, Jefferson Davis is picked out (and for no other offence than what is common to them all) to be the target and victim of Northern vengeance, then is the cruelty to him exceedingly great, and then, too, are those millions insulted and degraded by being sunk below accountability. The South will never be at peace with us so long as she believes that Jefferson Davis is kept in prison for no other offence than having been an enemy in war—in short, for no other than her own offence.

Does the North feel that in the continued imprisonment of Mr. Davis or in some no less significant war, she must maintain a monument of her abhorrence of the war? then why does she not in order to make the monument more faithful to history—more harmonious with the glaring fact that the North as well as the South was responsible for the war—confine along with Mr. Davis some representative of the guilty North—say some old pro-slavery Democrat, like Gen. Butler or Thomas H. Seymour?

peace for our exceedingly guilty land. The North and the South are still at enmity with each other. Each still casts all the blame of the war upon the other. Each still regards itself as the saint and the other as the sinner—whereas each should feel that she can well afford to forgive the other, if the other will but forgive her. We cannot reach a true peace until we become friends. A truce may be patched up between enemies, but it is only between friends that there can be a true, solid, and enduring peace. Let us be friends, that we may be blessed with such a peace.

With great regard, your friend,
GERRIT SMITH.

Let us Disappoint the Radicals.

From the Newnan (Ga.) Herald.]

As it is now a fixed fact that the negro will be a voter in our future elections, our people, the Southern white men, should take some pains to instruct him on the subject, and impart to him such information in regard to our political affairs as will prepare him to vote understandingly. He should be taught that the Radicals profess great friendship for him for no other reason than that party may receive his support.—They care nothing for the negro except as they can use him here—in the South. Their love for the black is confined to the Southern climate, and it grows wonderfully cool when its possessors are found in a Northern State. Why do not the negro worshippers enfranchise their idol in Ohio, in Rhode Island, and other loyal States? Is the lately emancipated slave better prepared to exercise the right of suffrage than those born and raised free in Ohio and other Northern communities? Then why emancipate him if slavery elevated him above his brother born free? On the contrary, if the freedmen of the South is not the equal of the Northern black, but still is sufficiently enlightened to be entitled to vote, why not enfranchise the Northern negro? Why should the Northern black be deprived of this right? The motive of the Radicals is plain. They hope to increase their party strength in the South by enfranchising the Southern blacks. Let us try all proper means to defeat their devilish scheme. By their conduct the negro will make the Southern white men their enemies or friends, and a home friend is more highly to be prized than a pretended one at a distance. In some places designing men will measurably aid the negroes astray, greatly to the detriment of their dupes; but a proper policy on the part of our people will enable them to successfully control a large majority of the unblest voters.

The Southern Colored Vote.

The Mobile Advertiser and Register, edited by Hon. John Forsyth, looking upon current events, says: "The enfranchisement of the negro is a great first-rate Southern States Rights man, and the 'Long Haired Barbarians' as our Tribune confers apply terms the Northern intruders who have kindly come down here to take charge of them and of Southern politics generally, will be disappointed both in the dimes and the offices they expected to make by the venture. It is a plain case that, politically speaking, Southern whites and blacks are in the same boat, and must sink or swim together.

We copied yesterday what an intelligent negro said at a public meeting in South Carolina. He saw that his interests lay with his own people, and not with a rangers, and he advised the men of his own color to co-operate with Southern white men for the common Southern good.

In a majority of the Northern States where the Radicals rule, negroes are not permitted to vote without a property qualification. In the Legislature of New York, even very lately, a proposition was offered to allow negroes to vote for delegates to the Constitutional Convention to be held in this State, and it was voted down. In Ohio and Massachusetts, two of the most Radical States, negroes must own property and have money, else they cannot vote.—Our long haired barbarians had better go back to the North and make their own people do this justice to the colored men, before they undertake to be their champions down South. The Southern negroes, it is plain, intend to cast Southern votes.—Nashville Dispatch.

The New York "Journal of Commerce" has a thoughtful and sensible article on

"CRAMMING VS. LEARNING."

—suggested by the annual college catalogues, which are now coming to hand.—These catalogues show no deviation from the old beaten track of study.—The "High Pressure Pressure System" or, in other words, endeavoring to make a student learn in four years that which he could not properly accomplish in eight—is still in vogue. But it matters not apparently whether this course is wise or otherwise. A certain amount of study is marked out, upon the "getting through" with which the student's degree depends; and, consequently, the great aim is to "crum" into his head as much of the prescribed book knowledge as possible, rather than to develop such of his thinking and reasoning powers as would enable him to thoroughly digest one-fourth of the mental pabulum set before him.

The difficulty with our college curriculums always has been in originally copying the courses of study of the German and English Universities, and tenaciously holding to them, forgetting that in Germany, for instance, eight years and more are usually spent by the student in mastering these studies that are here pretended to be mastered in four; forgetting, also, the fact that the customs, habits, etc., of the two countries are so utterly different as to render the adopting of certain courses impossible without great modification. Here, for instance, the student, released from college halls after a servitude (in his eyes) of four years, plunges into a practical life; there, on the contrary, the student generally marries while at the university, and before he has completed his course is the father of several children.

Late news from Montana says the mining operations this season will be very extensive, and the estimated yield of the precious metals is thirty-six millions.

WORDS OF WARNING.

A Colored Man's Opinion of the Radical Party.

To the Colored Race throughout Tennessee.

I feel the great danger that will inevitably befall the colored race of the South by pursuing extreme, or what are commonly termed "Radical" measures. The white Radicals wish to make a cat's paw of us by throwing us "to the front" in a political point of view, as they did in the rebellion, because we are ignorant and do not understand their schemes. Why do they court the favor of freedom? It is because you are "loyal" to them. I contend that your best interest is to be loyal to yourselves, for your own advancement, by not adopting their wild policy.

The freedman can live happily and prosperously in the Southern States, only by standing on a Conservative platform. True, these Radicals have made us voters, to suit their own selfish ends, but have they not prohibited us, at the same time, from exercising the right of sitting in the jury box, and the right of holding office? They say that we shall not vote for those of our own color, and that it is a high crime for us to vote for whom we please. Are we not capable of thinking and acting for ourselves? If not, we are, in my opinion, no better than political slaves—mere tools, to be used, when needed, and then thrown aside. Never will I consent to thus encourage the wild schemes of these white Radicals, to my own destruction and to the destruction of my race in the South.

I claim to be a true Conservative. I am neither a Radical nor a Rebel—not an instrument to breed strife between the two races, but peace; not for hostility, but tranquility. Those of my own color who act with me claim the right to follow our own interest and opinions as a race, without Radical dictation. We easily perceive how, after denying us admission to the ballot and jury box—after withholding from us the right to vote until our assistance became absolutely essential—these pretended friends of the black man tell us, in the words of the *Press and Times*, that if we do not vote for them, we "ought to be sent to the lunatic asylum." There is a sound platform of liberty and equality, surely. I do not believe that there is a freedman in all Tennessee ignorant enough to be taken in by such a sham.

JOSEPH E. WILLIAMS.

Green Joking.

From the New Orleans Picayune.]

The Ohio House of Representatives, ruled by a majority which voted to compel the Southern States to give the right of suffrage "without respect to race or color," has voted by a considerable majority not to strike out the word "white" out of their own constitution. Extend the principles of eternal justice to everybody but me, is the motto of the Ohio abolitionist. Give the black men a chance to rise to political equality everywhere, so he does not come with his new found powers into my bailiwick. So say they all, saving a few who are in dead earnest in their cosmopolitan notions of universal fraternity, and a few who clamor for negro suffrage just before the elections to collect the votes of the few sincere ones and forget it afterwards. Now that the main objects of Radicalism are accomplished, in the inflicting of the military bill on the South, it has come to be feared that there are more Republicans than are unwilling to have the negro vote at home, than there are ultra free suffrage men, who are likely to be soured by refusing the negro test.

It is a political calculation, and the Ohio Republicans have decided that it is best for the present elections to leave this "high moral" idea and "eternal principle" of Republicanism out of the creed.

Immediately after the defeat of this measure, a Democratic Representative, one Mr. Beer, from Crawford county, prepared a preamble and resolution to meet the political condition, in which he assumed that the State of Ohio would be placed on the legitimate application of the doctrines of the majority in Congress.

The preamble argues that as the Reconstruction Committee of Congress, and the Federal Congress, had decided to refuse representation to ten States in the Union, until, among other things, they should confer the right of suffrage on the blacks, this is one of the indispensable proofs of loyalty, without which no State is entitled to representation in the Congress of the United States, or to have civil governments of their own. The State of Ohio thus becomes disqualified, under the rules of Congress, and may be deprived at any time of her right of representation. Mr. Beer therefore moved an application to Stevens, as the leader of the House, in these words:

Resolved, That our Senators be instructed and our members in Congress requested, to use their influence with the said Stevens, to the end that he may restrain his Congress from reducing the State of Ohio to a territorial condition, and from placing the government of the State in the hands of a brigadier.

This sounds like sarcasm, but there is a power of logic in it that is more easily voted down than answered.

The Bankrupt Law.

Congress having refused to change the time for putting this new law into operation, so persistently pressed in the Senate yesterday, the next step is the appointment of about 3,000 Registers of Bankruptcy—a power very doubtful under the Constitution,—which has conferred upon Chief Justice Chase, and who, it is thought, will enter upon its exercise soon after the meeting of the Supreme Court. Thou sands of worthy people, whose hands are tied and whose hearts are sad, are waiting prayerfully and patiently for the practical operations and benefits of this Law. It is but a slow process at the best, and therefore, on the score of mercy, the more necessity for a speedy action.—N. Y. Express.

Outsiders, of the Conservative tendency, believe that impeachment will not be agreed on, but those more Radical are equally confident that the reverse will be the case.

Sale of Land.

Jas. L. Payne, adm'r, etc., vs Thithlee Duncan, et al.

By virtue of a decree of the Chancery Court at Winchester, February term, 1867, pronounced in the above cause, I will, on

Monday, May 6th, 1867,

at the Courthouse door in Winchester, offer for sale, to the highest bidder, on a credit of one, two and three years, except in cash, the lands described in the pleading in this cause, containing, in all, about 223 acres. A lien retained until the purchase money is paid.

H. R. ESTILL, C. & M.

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